

# ECCENTRIC FORMS OF HEBREW VERSE

BY

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THE influence of Arabic on Hebrew poetry made itself felt first and foremost in the art of versification. But it is not the meter alone that has been revolutionized by Arabic poetry: the exterior aspect of Hebrew verse has equally been affected by it. The Arabs set the fashion for poets to indulge in strange devices, which gave their poems an interest apart from their content and rhythmic beauty.<sup>1</sup> Due partly to this influence, and partly, also, to a native sense of playfulness, mediæval Hebrew poets have developed a certain species of verse which may be called whimsical. Such compositions lay special stress upon some odd device, calculated to catch the eye, or to surprise the ear, or, otherwise, to startle us by its strange peculiarity. The difficulties in which this species of writing abounds challenged the ingenuity of the best minds and gave them an outlet for their pent-up youthfulness. To cite but one instance out of many, there is Abraham ibn Ezra, in the midst of his weary wandering, penning picturesque epistles or writing riddles to his friends. In fact, this peculiar class of compositions is not only interesting to the student of Hebrew poetry, but is just as interesting to the student of Jewish pastimes and amusements, and in a measure it may also serve as an index of Jewish optimism.

All whimsical compositions may be said to fall into three main divisions, those which appeal to the eye, those which appeal to the ear, and those which strike us as peculiar, not by their form or their sound, but by the fact that they make use of some ingenious combination of letters, words, or phrases. The odd devices by which the various whimsicalities are produced are quite numerous, and the following is an attempt to elucidate and illustrate each of them:

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<sup>1</sup> See Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie*, Leipzig, 1836, p. 164.

1-2. *Acrostics and Lipograms*

The most ancient of the poetic whimses is the acrostic, and since the Bible itself contains some poems with acrostics, this device must be considered as genuinely Jewish, or at least not the result of Arabic influence. It is also of all groups the most frequently met with in Hebrew literature, and therefore stands in no need of illustration.<sup>2</sup> But akin to the acrostic is the lipogram, which is a poem so constructed as to omit entirely one or more letters of the alphabet, or, on the contrary, restricted to the use of a certain letter in each word. The earliest examples of the lipogram are, perhaps, the two poems contained in the eleventh chapter of Harizi's *Tahkemoni*, one of which is restricted to the use of the letter ר"ש in each word, and the other to the entire omission of the same letter.<sup>3</sup> More remarkable, however, are the two lipograms of Abraham Bedarshi, one of which consists of a thousand words, each beginning with the letter א"ל,<sup>4</sup> and the other of four hundred and twelve words, each of which is restricted to the use of the letters between א"ל and ל"מ and the omission of any letter that follows ל"מ in the alphabet.<sup>5</sup> His son, Yedaiah, likewise cultivated this species of composition, and wrote a long prayer, each word of which begins with the letter מ"ם.<sup>6</sup> Difficult as this mode of composition is, there were nevertheless a number of poets who cultivated it with more or less success. Of those who imitated Abraham Bedarshi's first lipogram, mention should be made of Joseph ben Sheshet ibn Latimi, in the fourteenth century,<sup>7</sup> Israel Nagara in the sixteenth century,<sup>8</sup> Isaac

<sup>2</sup> On the various forms of the acrostic comp. Zunz. *Synagogale Poesie*, Berlin, 1855, p. 105, etc.; MGWJ., vol. 47, p. 171. For an exceptional case of acrostic see Divan of Judah Halevi, ed. Brody, vol. 2, p. 93-100.

<sup>3</sup> Comp. תחכמוני ed. Kaminka, Warsaw, 1899, p. 114, beginning קרא בגרן and p. 116, beginning גאון עדיני

<sup>4</sup> אצילנו, גאון עדיני (vol. iv, pp. 59-65), comp. also כרם חמר vol. ii, p. 116. No. 5.

<sup>5</sup> בקשת הלרין (in numerous editions; see Benjacov א"ס s. v.).

<sup>6</sup> בקשת הממין (See *ibid.* s. v.)

<sup>7</sup> אאמיר את אדוני תפלה למשורר ר' יוסף ברבי ששת בן לטימי (in אאמיר את אדוני תפלה למשורר ר' יוסף ברבי ששת בן לטימי, קובץ ויכוחים, Breslau, 1844). Comp. Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte*, p. 499; Landshuth העבודה, p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> אהיה אשר אהיה. Venice, 1599, No. 54, beginning אהיה אשר אהיה



been imitated only by Wolf Buchner<sup>12</sup> and M. Hesse.<sup>13</sup> In regard Zedek in the nineteenth.<sup>11</sup> The second lipogram of Bedarshi has been imitated only by Wolf Buchner<sup>12</sup> and M. Hesse.<sup>13</sup> In regard to Buchner, it may be stated in this connection that almost all his poetic effusions are whimsical, and that most of his whimseys are lipograms of one form or other. His *Shire Tehillah*, for instance, which is the most pretentious of his poetic compositions, is, with the exception of the first six leaves, made up of various lipograms employing different letters of the alphabet for the different poems.<sup>14</sup>

While most of the lipograms make use of the letter א"ף, the letter ה"א was also not neglected. David ben Solomon Vidal, in the sixteenth century (d. after 1536), composed a poem of a thousand words, each beginning with ה"א,<sup>15</sup> and the same was done by M. S. Rabener in the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> In the 18th century Aaron Hayyim Voltera composed a religious poem each

אף. הגן vol. iii, p. 164.

אף. אקרישך Leghorn, 1780, fol. 43-47, beginning אקרישך

אף. אקרישך אב אחר אל ארץ אפים

אלף אלפין אגרת אבל אוכרה אל איש אשכולות... אדלר אב"ר ארצות אנג

1890. He left out the name Nathan because it begins with נון

אל"ף f

שיר, Frankfurt, 1802; שירי תהלה, Berlin, 1808; שיר יודיות, Frankfurt,

Hamburg, 1829. According to Fürst, *Bibliotheca* vol. i, p. 390. Hesse is only the editor, not the author.

7a-8a each word contains the letter א; דודה עם דודה

שיר יודיות, comp. note 12 above; fol. 29b-40a, שירי תהלה, ל

than 850 words, each containing a ל. but no letter that follows

alphabet; fol. 40-43 שירי תהלה לראש חדש

similar to the preceding; שירי תהלה ליום ב' של ר"ח

omits all letters between א and ל; fol. 46b-50k

שירי תהלה לר"ה אייר

contains a נון in each word; fol. 50b-52a שירי תהלה

letter א in each word. The same method is carried on for the

aths, the poem for סיון has the letter ס in each word and so on.

beginning בקשת ההא הגדול הגבור הגורא המצוי

(in his list of the poem for סיון) It is preceded by two couplets as follows:

במקום קרבן עולה מנחה ונכד ורביעית ההין

אשף שוחת בתחינתו העולה היא אלף ההין

אבינו מלכנו אתה יוצר אנחנו החומר

אתה האב הסבת ושמע קול שועת בן הָאָהּ אומר

with the motto נתתי שיר ה (Ezek. xvi, 43) in

אני, vol. i, pp. 47-52.

1-2. *Acrostics and Lipograms*

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<sup>2</sup> On the various forms of the acrostic comp. Zunz. *Synagoga* Berlin, 1855, p. 105, etc.; MGWJ., vol. 47, p. 171. For an excellent case of acrostic see *Divan of Judah Halevi*, ed. Brody, vol. 2, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Comp. *תחכמוני* ed. Kaminka, Warsaw, 1899, p. 114, beginning with ר"ש and p. 116, beginning with א"ל.

<sup>4</sup> *כרם חמד* vol. iv, pp. 59-65), comp. also *כרם חמד* vol. ii, No. 5.

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<sup>7</sup> *מיר את אדוני תפלה למשורר ר' יוסף ברבי ששט בן לטימ* (beginning with א"ל, Breslau, 1844). Comp. Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte*, p. 98. Landshuth *העבודה* p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> *איה אשר איה* Venice, 1599, No. 54, beginning with א"ל.

been imitated only by Wolf Buchner<sup>12</sup> and M. Hesse.<sup>13</sup> In regard Zedek in the nineteenth.<sup>11</sup> The second lipogram of Bedarshi has been imitated only by Wolf Buchner<sup>12</sup> and M. Hesse.<sup>13</sup> In regard to Buchner, it may be stated in this connection that almost all his poetic effusions are whimsical, and that most of his whimseys are lipograms of one form or other. His *Shire Tehillah*, for instance, which is the most pretentious of his poetic compositions, is, with the exception of the first six leaves, made up of various lipograms employing different letters of the alphabet for the different poems.<sup>14</sup>

While most of the lipograms make use of the letter ךָ, the letter ךָ was also not neglected. David ben Solomon Vidal, in the sixteenth century (d. after 1536), composed a poem of a thousand words, each beginning with ךָ,<sup>15</sup> and the same was done by M. S. Rabener in the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> In the 18th century, Aaron Hayyim Voltera composed a religious poem each

<sup>o</sup> Comp. **הגרן** vol. iii, p. 164.

<sup>19</sup> Comp. אגרות הרמ"ו Leghorn, 1780, fol. 43-47, beginning אקרויך  
אם אקרויך אם אחד אל ארץ אפים

אלף אלפין אנת אבל אזכרה אל איש אשכולות... אדרל אב"ד ארצות אנגליא<sup>11</sup>  
 London, 1890. He left out the name Nathan because it begins with  
 נון אל"ה.

שיר ירירות, Frankfurt, 1808; שירי תהלה, Berlin, 1802; שיר נפלא, Frankfurt, 1810.

<sup>11</sup> בקשת הלמדן חרשה. Hamburg, 1829. According to Fürst, *Bibliotheca Judaica*, vol. i, p. 390. Hesse is only the editor, not the author.

<sup>14</sup> Fol. 7a-8a **עַם רוּת** כִּנְסַת יִשְׂרָאֵל each word contains the letter א; fol. 12-29 **שְׁנוֹי תְּהִלָּה** comp. note 12 above; fol. 29b-40a **שְׁנֵי יְדִידוֹת** consists of more than 850 words, each containing a ל, but no letter that follows ל in the alphabet; fol. 40-43 **חֲמִישֵׁי הַרְאֵה** similar to the preceding; fol. 44-46a **שְׁנוֹי תְּהִלָּה לְיוֹם ב'** omits all letters between א and ל; fol. 46b-50k **שְׁנוֹי תְּהִלָּה לְחֹמֶת אֵינֶר** contains א נון in each word; fol. 50b-52a **שְׁנוֹי תְּהִלָּה לְחֹמֶת אֵינֶר** has the letter א in each word. The same method is carried on for the other months, the poem for **סִינֵן** has the letter ס in each word and so on.

<sup>15</sup> מכתם לרור (in his הגדול הנכבד הנורא המצוי beginning בקשת ההחי"ן Venice, 1546, fol. 100a). It is preceded by two couplets as follows:

במקום קרבן עולה מנחה	ונסך ורביעיות החין
אשפה שיחה בתחיתני	העולה היא אלה החין
אבינו מלכנו אתה	יוצר אנחנו ההומר
אתה האב הסכת ושמו	קול שועת בן הא הא

<sup>10</sup> *Ezek. xvi, 43*) *הָא דְרִיכְךָ בְּרֹאשׁ נִתְּתִי שִׁיר הָאֵלֶּךָ* with the motto *אֵלֶּיךָ בָּרָאשׁ נִתְּתִי שִׁיר הָאֵלֶּךָ* in *אוצר הספרות*, vol. i, pp. 47-52.



word of which begins with the letter שׁי״ן.<sup>17</sup> As might be expected, the artificiality of these compositions was no aid to clearness, and in several instances commentaries became indispensable.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Pictorial Whimseys

Belonging to the same class of whimsicalities, though not so ancient nor yet so common as the acrostic, are the pictorial whimses. It is generally accepted that Hebrew poets first learned from the Arabs to give their poems the shape of geometrical figures or figures taken from the vegetable and animal kingdoms.<sup>19</sup> But the desire to embellish the exterior of poetic compositions can be traced to much earlier times, for the Talmud has already prescribed various forms in which certain poetic passages of the Bible are to be written in the scrolls. Some are to appear like small bricks above larger bricks, and larger bricks above smaller ones, and some are to appear like small bricks laid upon small bricks, and large bricks upon large bricks.<sup>20</sup> However, as these whimsicalities became more prevalent and more varied in the Middle Ages, it is but reasonable to assume that Arabic influence had something to do with it. Usually such eccentric compositions require more scribal skill than poetic inspiration. But there are some pictorial poems in which the construction and the form are so mutually dependent upon each other, that they require more than the mere ingenuity of a scribe. Such, for instance, is the *Tree Poem*, which Abraham ibn Ezra wrote in honor of Rabbi Jacob Tam.<sup>21</sup>

### 4. Echo Verses

From poetic whimses which appeal to the eye we come to consider those which appeal to the ear. Of course, the oldest is

<sup>17</sup> בקשה חדשה, Leghorn, 1740.

<sup>18</sup> Comp. e. g., ברם חמד, vol. iv, p. 59, and the poem of Volterra mentioned above.

<sup>19</sup> Delitzsch, *loc. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Comp. מגילה, 16b; מסכת סופרים, chap. xii, 10.

<sup>21</sup> אילן שעשה... ר' אברהם בן עזרא הספרדי לר' יעקב בן ר' מאיר מצרפת (in Rosin, *Reime und Gedichte*, pp. 145-147). The Karaite Aaron b. Elijah, the younger, also composed a *tree poem* (Comp. כתר תורה, Gosslow, 1866, No. 20). (Communication of Dr. Marx.) Abraham Gabison composed a poem in the shape of a seven-branched candlestick (עומר השכחה) (p. 134b). Comp. also Steinschneider, ספרות ישראל, p. 222.



undoubtedly the echo verse, so-called because the last word of each verse consists of the ending of the preceding word, and sounds like its echo. The mere repetition of a rhyme in the middle of a verse, however, does not constitute it an echo verse. The poem of Moses ibn Ezra, for instance, beginning שבחי חי קשוב שוב, חום ורחם,<sup>22</sup> does not belong to this class, nor are the poems the Shibzi beginning חלל דל and כחום ידירה ידירה echo poems in the strict sense of the word.<sup>23</sup> It is necessary that the repetition of the rhyme should be at the end of the verse, just as the echo can only be heard when the original sound has stopped.

According to Kaufmann, who published a number of echo poems,<sup>24</sup> the echo verses are especially adapted for the elegy. Whether this opinion be accepted or not, the fact is that we have a number of elegies written in this eccentric form of verse, such as Joseph ben Solomon ibn Yahya's elegies on the death of Solomon ibn Adret,<sup>25</sup> and on the destruction of the temple,<sup>26</sup> Jomtob Valvasson's elegy on the death of Leon de Modena<sup>27</sup> and Isaac Aboab's (III) elegy on the destruction of the temple.<sup>28</sup> The echo verses, however, are by no means restricted to the elegy. Immanuel of Rome wrote a love poem in echo verse,<sup>29</sup> Israel Nagara composed a hymn in similar verses,<sup>30</sup> Jomtob Valvasson, mentioned above, wrote a poem of dedication,<sup>31</sup> and one anonymous echo poem has

<sup>22</sup> Comp. *Litbl. d. Or.*, 1847, p. 403, also *איצר הספרות*, vol. v, p. 94.

<sup>23</sup> Bacher considered it so, comp. his *Hebräische und arabische Poesie der Juden Jemens*, p. 81, and the Hebrew part, p. 4, No. 23, and p. 11, No. 132.

<sup>24</sup> Comp. *Z. f. H. B.*, vol. i, pp. 22, 61, 114, 144.

<sup>25</sup> Comp. *ibid.*, p. 24, the echo verses begin with the fifth verse קרחה להרחוב כנשרים שרים חושו ותחת שיר אמרים מרים

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115, קרעו לכנות כבגדים גדים כי זר וערל מקדשים דשים.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146, the poem proper begins במר נשמע קול אומרים הו הו במר נשמע.

<sup>28</sup> Comp. *הגן*, vol. iii, p. 158, beginning: יושבי בכל תבל אמרים מרים.

<sup>29</sup> Comp. *מחברות*, ed. Lemberg, 1870, p. 23, beginning חלבה בלבה.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23, beginning ילאה נשוא לב על שביה שח אמרים מרים (in *Litbl. d. Or.*, vol. iv, 526; also in *הכרמל*, vol. ii, p. 308; also in *האסף*, vol. iv, p. 22; *Z. f. H. B.*, vol. i, p. 144).

<sup>31</sup> *הד אורים שיר גדול לחנוכת ביהמ"ד ת"ח בוויניצא*, Venice, 1661. Comp. Steinschneider, *Die italienische Litteratur der Juden (Monatsschrift, 1899, p. 421)*, also the Russian Jewish Encyclopedia, vol. 5, col. 292, where three stanzas are quoted.

even been admitted into the liturgy.<sup>32</sup> Then, again, there are a number of didactic poems in echo verse by Meir ben Joseph ibn Yahya,<sup>33</sup> Moses Abudiente,<sup>34</sup> Moses Zacuto,<sup>35</sup> Joseph Penso,<sup>36</sup> Moses Hayyim Luzzatto,<sup>37</sup> Jacob Daniel Ulamo<sup>38</sup> and M. Freund.<sup>39</sup> The elasticity of the form, in spite of its difficulties, has been further demonstrated by Buxtorf in his prefatory remarks to his lexicon,<sup>40</sup> and even more so by R. Fürstenthal in his clever dialogue between a beggar and a miser, in which the miser is deceived by the echo of his own words to part with his fortune.<sup>41</sup>

### 5. *Macaronics*

Perhaps the most whimsical of all poetic whimsies is the macaronic, which may be composed in one of two ways. It may consist either of various languages welded together in one and the same verse, or of Hebrew words so selected that they may be phonetically interpreted as words of another language. Tradition ascribes to Samuel ha-Nagid the composition of a poem of seven stanzas, each in a different language.<sup>42</sup> But the earliest existing example of the first kind of a macaronic is Harizi's poem in the eleventh chapter of the *Tahkemoni*, each line of which consists of three phrases, one in Hebrew, one in Arabic, and one in Aramaic, all fused into one

<sup>32</sup> (פזמון שיר נאמן) מה אחרית לחוט בתבל-הבל רודף שרירות לב ורצון-אמן pt. ii, fol. 21, Amsterdam, 1793; also in *הג השבועות ואזהרות* (Vienna, 1889, p. 3).

<sup>33</sup> מה תלכו לקראת נחשים חשים, published first as an epigraph to the *ספר הכוזב*, Fano, 1506; reprinted by Kaufmann in *Z. f. H. B.*, vol. i, p. 116, and by Berliner in *Aus meiner Bibliothek*, Frankfurt, 1898, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> נוזלים במכמן הון כהרים תרים ימצו וישתו כוס שמרים מרים. See *המאסף* 1789, p. 162; *Litbl. d. Or.*, vol. iv, p. 729; *המאסף* vol. iv, p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> Comp. *הפתח ערוך*, stanzas 52-67.

<sup>36</sup> אי זה שבר צדק עשיתי נפש רפש (in *his התקנה*, Leghorn, 1770, fol. 17a).

<sup>37</sup> Comp. *מגיל יז*, Leipzig, 1837, p. 77-78 (חלק ד' ענין ד').

<sup>38</sup> Comp. *ערוך ערוך*, § 14-34, 59-81, 147-149.

<sup>39</sup> כוכבי יצחק (in *אחרית הכסלים*, vol. 31, p. 105).

<sup>40</sup> Comp. *Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum*, Glasgow, 1824, p. 4. The poem begins as follows: *אלי סורי הבחורים קרבו כל הנערים ערים*. It is reprinted by Kaufmann in *Z. f. H. B.*, vol. i, p. 145.

<sup>41</sup> *ההד* in *Samoscz*, Breslau, 1827, p. 74-75.

<sup>42</sup> Comp. *Steinschneider* *ספרות ישראל*, p. 248.

homogeneous verse.<sup>43</sup> The fusing of Hebrew and its sister languages, Aramaic and Arabic,<sup>44</sup> may not appear so difficult or so strange as the fusing of Hebrew and European languages, yet even this feat has been accomplished. In a volume of liturgical compositions entitled *שבע שמחות* (Leghorn, 1782, folio 27a), there is a poem for the feast of Purim in which Hebrew and Spanish are fused together,<sup>45</sup> and in a similar collection entitled *שיר נאמן* (Amsterdam, 1793, fol. 21-22), we find two more poems in which Hebrew and French are the component parts.<sup>46</sup> Mordecai Astruc<sup>47</sup> composed three macaronic poems in which Hebrew and Provençal are used in alternate verses,<sup>48</sup> and Yomtob Valvasson wrote a sonnet, each verse of which consists of Hebrew, Portuguese and Italian.<sup>49</sup>

The device of mixing languages, however, is not quite so difficult nor quite so startling as the use of Hebrew words which at

<sup>43</sup> *תחבובי*, ed. Kaminka, pp. 112-114. See also *Montsschrift*, 1857, p. 220.

<sup>44</sup> Delitzsch erroneously ascribes a poem written in Hebrew Aramaic and Syriac to Raphael Meldola (See *Zur Gesch. d. Jüd. Poesie*, p. 164). The poem he refers to, while written in these three languages, does not belong to the class of Macaronics, and is the composition of Raphael Emanuel Hai Ricchi (Comp. *אדרת אליהו*, Leghorn, 1742).

<sup>45</sup> קאנטיגה די פורים אלה ליואנטיגה. אי אמי מי לייאמאואן חיים גילובי, מורוס אי אנדייאנוס אפינ פור מי אל עליון. דר הביון ומחסה לאביון

<sup>46</sup> One begins משה עלה לשמים סין אבילה אי סין מים and the other begins יא מינדרא אל סיניור די לא רידינכיון. The first was also edited and translated by Ink (Jellineck) in *Litbl. d. Or.*, 1844, p. 670-672.

<sup>47</sup> Probably the same who is mentioned by Zunz (*Zur Geschichte*, p. 473) as the author of the *piyut* איש היה כתם

<sup>48</sup> a) משבית לכל b) אפתה שפתי ברנה. קנטארין דמאן אדינא. יראת ה' למנה c) ה. טאן קי אויין לקור גאי, נשורה אפתה שפתי ברנה, גראן דיב דאב שיל קי פרטוא c) ה. דומינא אודה שמך אל שובן מעונה. The second poem was first published by Asher in *Litbl. d. Or.* vol. v, p. 733. It was afterwards re-edited and transliterated by Ink (Jellineck) in the same periodical, vol. vi, p. 90-92. Jellineck also pointed out that it has the name of מרדכי in acrostic. The three poems are now contained in a little volume entitled *Poésies Hébraïco-Provençales du Rituel Israélite Comtadin*, traduites et transcrites par S.M. Dom Pedro II. d'Alcantara, empereur du Brésil, Avignon, 1891. The third poem has מרדכי אשררוק יצ"ו in an acrostic. It is, therefore, safe to assume that the three poems were composed by the same man. The editor, however, failed to notice this acrostic and put forth the suggestion that the author was perhaps Mordecai Ventura (*ibid.* p. vi).

<sup>49</sup> Comp. *Monatsschrift*, 1899, p. 421.



the same time convey phonetically a meaning in a different language. According to Reggio,<sup>50</sup> Leon Modena was the first among Hebrew writers to invent this class of poems. He has reference to the octave which Modena wrote at the early age of thirteen on the death of his teacher Basula. This short poem, though written in Hebrew, can also be interpreted as if it were Italian.<sup>51</sup> Reggio's statement, however, is doubtful, for we find that Menahem de Lonzano, an older contemporary of Modena, reproached a certain poet for composing a Hebrew poem which began with the words *מרומי על מה עם רם הומה* to the tune of a non-Jewish song which began with the words *מורירי מי אלמא איי מורירי*.<sup>52</sup> Evidently until we ascertain the identity of this poet,<sup>53</sup> we cannot say whether Modena was the first to invent this class of macaronics or not.

In the seventeenth century Moses Hayyim Catalano wrote a poem in honor of the marriage of his sister, which likewise can be read as Hebrew or as Italian.<sup>54</sup> A certain Judah ha-Rophe, in the eighteenth century, composed an epithalemium which can be read as Hebrew as well as Yiddish.<sup>55</sup> In the eighteenth century

<sup>50</sup> Comp. *בחינת הקבלה*, Goritiae, 1852, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> The elegy begins: *קינה שמור או מה כסס אוצר בו*, Comp. Libowitz *ריא מוריא*, N. Y., 1901, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> The passage in Lonzano's *שתי ידות* (Venice, 1618, fol. 142a) reads as follows: *אבל מה שראוי למאוס הוא קצת שירים שמתחילין במלות דומות ללשון* „הלעז כאותו שחיבר שיר לנועם מורירי מי אלמא איי מורירי ואמר „מרומי על מה עם רם הומה וכו'“ ונראה בעיניו שעשה דבר גדול והוא לא ידע כי שיר כזה פגול הוא לא ירצה כי האומרו וזכר דברי הנואף והנואפת ולבו ורעיוניו עליהם, וכן האומרים „שם נורא“ במקום „שיניורה“ וכל הדומה לזה

<sup>53</sup> Dukes who first cited the passage quoted in the preceding note made the erroneous statement that Lonzano had reference to Israel Nagara (*Litbl. d. Or.*, vol. iv, p. 359). He was evidently misled by the fact that later on the same page he speaks of Nagara. Graetz (*Geschichte*, vol. ix, p. 395) and Bernfeld (*האטקף* vol. iv, p. 20-21) followed him blindly, copying even the misprints, *e.g.*, *עם רם* for *עם רב*. The same is done by Rosanes in his recent work on the Jews of Turkey (*בתיגורמה*) vol. iii, pp. 176, 313).

<sup>54</sup> Reprinted by Wolf in his *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, vol. iii, p. 726. It begins *און הכות אוינו* Comp. also *Monatsschrift*, 1899, p. 420.

<sup>55</sup> Wagenseil (*Sota*, Altdorf, 1674, p. 49) states that Judah ha-Rophe had told him of this and that he himself remembered only the first line, which is as follows: *יעקוב איש יושב אהלים אבן הראש ופינה*, Jaacob is *jo so woll im eben heraus auf eina*. Fürst (B. J. ii, p. 49) invents the title of *שיר חתונה*.



this kind of writing was cultivated by Ephraim Luzzatto,<sup>56</sup> but the cleverest of macaronics are the echo macaronics of Rosenzweig. In his book of epigrams there are a number of them in which a girl is represented as soliloquizing in Hebrew, and the echo responds to her sentiments in English.<sup>57</sup> Aside from the epigrammatic sting of these couplets, the effect of the combination of the two devices in one verse, the echo and the macaronic, is quite startling.

### 6-7. *Typographical and Hieroglyphic Eccentricities*

In a manuscript collection of liturgical poems coming from Tunis, and now in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America,<sup>58</sup> I find two poems which seem to me to be unique in character, and may be designated as typographical whimsies. Their peculiarity consists in spelling out the letters of the last word of each stanza.<sup>59</sup> One of the poems has the name of **יצחק** in acrostic, and the other that of **פרי**. It is, therefore, safe to assume that both are the compositions of Isaac Faragi. The same manuscript contains another poem by Faragi, the peculiarity of which is that the names of almost all the diacritical signs are woven into the poem and made an integral part of it. It is not far from possible that it was the intention of the author to substitute the diacritical sign in the place of its name and expect the reader to supply the meaning himself. It is for this reason that I designate it as a hieroglyphic whimsey.<sup>60</sup>

### 8-10. *Chain Verses, Monosyllabic, and Monomial Verses*

There are also several whimsical devices which in a measure appeal both to the eye as well as to the ear. One of these is to be found in the so-called chain verses, which are so constructed

<sup>56</sup> a) מצבת קבורת פלוני אלמוני (in his **אלה בני הנעורים**, London, 1768, p. 42); b) שיר מוזמר ליום חתונה (*ibid.* p. 54).

<sup>57</sup> קול עילמה וקול הר (in his **חמשה ואלף**, N. Y., 1903, p. 284).

<sup>58</sup> פיוטים ושירים מספרדים MS. Hirsch, 47.

<sup>59</sup> Comp. below Hebrew poems Nos. 1, 2. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Zabana also made use of this device. Comp. my edition of **ספר שעשועים**, N. Y., 1914, p. 63, note 7.

<sup>60</sup> Comp. below Hebrew poems No. 3.



Naphtali Kohen,<sup>68</sup> and Jakuthiel of Wilna<sup>69</sup> have each given us a sample of a palindrome, while the Jesuitical verses have been cultivated by Judah Harizi<sup>70</sup> and Immanuel of Rome.<sup>71</sup> In this connection mention may be made of a Yiddish proverb which makes use of a palindrome. The proverb reads ונתנו מאכט צוריק ונתנו. The word ונתנו (and they shall give) reads the same forward and backward. In other words, they who give have also the right to demand.<sup>72</sup>

### 13. Mosaic Verses

A great deal of ingenuity is also shown in the Mosaic verses. I have in mind three such compositions. The one is the letter of Solomon ben Simon Duran, consisting entirely of Talmudic phrases strung together so as to make one homogeneous composition.<sup>73</sup> The other two are poems by Immanuel Frances,<sup>74</sup> and Moses Abudiente,<sup>75</sup> each word of which is found in the Bible as a proper name, but in the poem all of them retain their original etymological meaning.

### 14. Mnemonic Verses

Equally ingenious are the Mnemonic verses, which fall into two classes. In one class the verses are intended as an aid to memory, and consist of words which help us to remember facts and dates, and at the same time convey the meaning required of them in the poem. In the other class the numerical value of the Hebrew letters is taken into account, and each verse, when the value of its letters is summed up, amounts to a certain number, usually the year of the composition. Of the first class of Mnemonics Abraham Gabison cites two examples. One is a versification

<sup>68</sup> Comp. הגן vol. i, p. 100, begins: תפלה; אחלה לקוני למלא רצוני.

<sup>69</sup> Comp. משלוח מנות מאת יקותיאל בן יהודה ליב הרופא מוילנא המגלה הזאת, ed. by L. Scherschewsky, Vienna, 1879.

<sup>70</sup> Comp. החכמוני, ed. Kaminka, p. 86-87, beginning: גבירנו צירנו.

<sup>71</sup> Comp. במהבירה, chap. ii, ed. Lemberg, p. 86-87, beginning: המליצה הישרה, and המליצה הנזורה.

<sup>72</sup> Comp. Bernstein, *Jüdische Sprichwörter*, Warsaw, 1908, p. 94.

<sup>73</sup> Comp. כרם המד, vol. ix, pp. 110-113.

<sup>74</sup> Comp. אשר שרי עמוס הושים, pp. 59-59, beginning: כהן שפתים.

<sup>75</sup> Comp. *Litbl. d. Or.*, vol. iv, p. 784, beginning: צורי שדי יואל ישוב.

of the Talmudic tracts by Isaac ibn Zimrah, written in the meter of Judah Halevi's Zion Elegy,<sup>76</sup> and the other is a versification of the names of various chapters of the Talmud by Saadia ibn Danon.<sup>77</sup> A similar poem with a double commentary was written by Shabbethai Beer.<sup>78</sup> To the second class of Mnemonics belong the poems of Eichenbaum,<sup>79</sup> Gottlober,<sup>80</sup> Sommerhausen,<sup>81</sup> A. J. Stern<sup>82</sup> and Zweifel.<sup>83</sup>

For the sake of completeness, we might also mention other verse-forms which are eccentric, though difficult to put under any specific classification. Such, for instance, are the poems in the ninth chapter of Harizi's *Tahkemoni*, where the poet undertakes to frame verses around some given Biblical sentence, or the Piyut of Kalir for Purim, every stanza of which begins with one of the words of the seventeenth verse in the second chapter of the Book of Esther.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps this might be considered as a form of acrostic.

There may be other eccentric compositions entitled to be included in this study, such as the Anagram, the Riddle, the Alliterative compositions, and the *Tegnis*. But these must be left for another occasion, as they are not, strictly speaking, eccentricities of form.

The foregoing account is in no way intended as a defense for this class of poetic composition. There cannot be the least doubt that these eccentricities tend to make these compositions clumsy and cumbersome, and very rarely add to the intrinsic value of the poem. But the student of literature has to take account of every literary phenomenon that presents itself.

<sup>76</sup> Comp. עומר השנחה Leghorn, 1748, fol. 123c.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 123d.

<sup>78</sup> Comp. ספר בארעשק Venice, 1674, fol. 1-6. It begins ברכות אלו להרים לחימי שביעית להרים [Communication of Mr. Israel Schapiro.]

<sup>79</sup> Comp. his קול זמרה Leipzig, 1836, p. 49-53.

<sup>80</sup> שיר לפק"י (in Wohlman's הכוכבים 1865, p. 30).

<sup>81</sup> דעת דרות (in Filipowski's ספר האסף Leipzig, 1849, pp. 110-113).

<sup>82</sup> Comp. Zeitlin, *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, p. 382.

<sup>83</sup> מנחת תורה (in כרם חמר vol. ix, p. 80-81).

<sup>84</sup> עבודת ישראל (יאהב אומן תימות הגן p. 674).



*Hebrew Appendix*

illustrating the typographical and hieroglyphic eccentricities.<sup>85</sup>

## 1

עושר וריש	י'וצר מידו
אשיר לכבודו ש"ן יו"ד רי"ש	
צ'ור מעוז דלים	באמת שמו
רוכב גלגלים	מי יקדמו
מלאכים סלים	רצים אל נאמו
כל אל זולתו	ש"ן קו"ף רי"ש
ולא יש בלתו	אל"ף חי"ת רי"ש
ח'סין בכל הוא	ואהללו
כי אין כמוהו	וכפעלו
הימים רהו	כי בשעלו
מדר מימיהם	צד"י וי"ו רי"ש
ושאון נליהם ש"ן בי"ת רי"ש	
ק'ום ועשה פלא	העלם משבי
מבית הכלא	אל ארין צבי
שם ירעה טלה	וזאב עם לביא
עוז ירך הראה	מ"ם ה"א רי"ש
ובאורך נראה	אל"ף וי"ו רי"ש 86

## 2

מ"ם ה"א מ"ם	פ'לאו וגדלו
מ"ם יו"ד מ"ם	זעו וחלו
ושפתי בשיר	ר'זחש לשוני
שוכן הדביר	אל צור נאוני
כל היציר	נעלם מעיני
טי"ת רי"ש מ"ם	כי הוא לבדו
קו"ף דל"ת מ"ם	הרים יולדו
כאפר כפור	ג'בור מפזר
כאזור נבור	וגבורה אזור
אין לו הפור	חמים וגזר
ה"א יו"ד מ"ם	סך בדלתים
מ"ם רי"ש חי"ת מ"ם	בניחו יצא
שרפי מעלות	יהנו בסודו
חיות סובלות	כסאו והודו
להלל שואלות	מקום כבודו
וי"ו רי"ש מ"ם	נעלה במרומו
אל"ף דל"ת מ"ם	יצר בצלמו
את תוקף שמי	ח'ז'ק'ו מחוים
שומרי נאומי	זרע ענוים
כי עתה ימי	קו' מקוים
למ"ד כ"ף מ"ם	ישע אנלה
אל"ף תי"ו מ"ם 87	כי את גורלי

<sup>85</sup> See above Nos. 6 and 7.

<sup>86</sup> MS. Hirsch, 47, fol. 92a, No. 32.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. ibid. No. 33.

## 3

צור פלאיך מכל חי נשנבו  
 הן כשחק מאזנים לך נחשבו  
 אל מדבר בצדקה צאנך פרוק  
 לאסוף ולקבץ חיש להם שרוק  
 זרקא אל פנימו אבן ורוק  
 איך שמוע שופר הולך יתאבו  
 עם בפזר גדול חלו נכאבו  
 נון לירת בן יומנו וריש  
 יענה תלשא אף לה קול־חריש  
 פסקא רביע כאזלא גריש  
 מעפרים עם מעצבה שכבו  
 שעשועיה יום־יום לך יערבו  
 חיש בזקף גדול כירב דללו  
 גם שני גרושין מהר נחלו  
 מתביר זה עוד אל דרגא יעלו  
 מאריך טרחא עד כי רב דאבו  
 בו יניעי כח נוח ישובו  
 מנשוא עול דגש יונה יוחלה  
 בו כתרצה יפה תהיה מושלה  
 חשטפהו שבולת מי מחלה  
 אור משיחי יבנה ערים חרבו  
 את וכל בניך שירים ינובבו 88

פ־לאך קויתי רגלי רוממה  
 ירך על גוים רמה עצמה  
 ריב להושיע מה יקר חסדך  
 בלחך אין לגאול הרם ירך  
 דון באמה כי על חנם ננרך  
 בעדם הקיפם מקף נאמה  
 עוד היות לסגולתא נאה נעמה  
 ג־ואלי חי בשר כי אז נהיה  
 הוא לקרני פרה סורה געיא  
 קן ישובב יונה תמה רעיה  
 לה מהופך שופר כונן קוממה  
 יתמכו גם תורה לכל קדמה  
 י־ה בזקף קטון עד אן עמך  
 משכו שלשלת כבלי ועמך  
 עם תרין טעמין טוב טעמו טעמך  
 ירך שא ולצר נקם שלמה  
 חיש ביום אתנח את לבם נוחמה  
 ח־זיקי לב רפה מר לי יעטוף  
 צר יתיב במ הוות עני יחטוף  
 חיש כראש שבולת ימל גם שטוף  
 הנני מפיק לך אחות רוחמה  
 לך ידבר על־לב לקרוא נחמה

<sup>88</sup> MS. Hirsch. Part II, fol. 81, No. 31.



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